Design Resource

Animal Puppet - Pune, Maharashtra

Conventional Toy

by
Sanmati Hosure
IDC, IIT Bombay

Source:
https://dsource.in/resource/animal-puppet-pune-maharashtra

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Introduction

Puppet is a string wooden doll dressed with vibrant colour cloths. It is also known as 'kathaputli'. It is used for narrating historical stories, old myths, legends, and social awareness programmes. The joining of two Rajasthani words forms the term 'kathaputli'. 'Kath' means wood, and 'putli' means doll hence kathaputli means wooden doll or toy. A kathaputli is made up of wood, cloth, thread, and metal wire. Its upper body is made up of wood, and the rest is made of cotton and fabric. Colourful clothes and paints are used to decorate them. They are dressed in the medieval Rajasthani style. They do not have legs and are covered with long trailing skirts. The puppeteer manipulates them with his fingers tied with two to five strings. They possess distinctive facial features like large eyes, oval faces, large lips, and arched eyebrows.

A thousand years old tradition of the handmade puppet belongs to Rajasthan. A large state of India is a land of historical palaces, magnificent architecture, and royal families. Historically, the puppets were used to entertain royal families and local rulers. The tradition of handmade string puppets goes back to the era of Raja Vikramaditya of Ujjain. A puppet show was played on his life and achievements by the first Bhatt community artist. Later on, his descendants carried this tradition for hundreds of years for royal families and court members. In return, they get rewarded in terms of cash, livestock, or a portion of the harvest. The unique Rajasthani puppets are used for entertainment with some social message.

Every region of India has its own art stating its importance. Kids in the modern era having digital games and other entertainment mediums are like watching a puppet show. Everyone, right from the child to senior citizen, enjoys watching such traditional live shows. The puppeteer has the art of holding an audience throughout the show. Due to digitalization, the demand for such traditional art has been less. Hence, old artisans are shifting to other skills. Animal puppet-making is one of them. As Indian toys possess some cultural values, it's very important to upgrade these toys.

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Elephant puppet.

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Kathaputli

Artist Gopal Bhatt.

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Gopal with wooden planter.

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People

Originally, puppet art is formed by the Bhatt community from Rajasthan, India. This art is carried from generation to generation. Right from the making of the wooden puppet to the puppet show is a mastery of Bhatt artists. String puppets are the most important part of Indian tradition. Puppetry is not only famous in India but also in other countries too. Puppetry is not just an entertainment show, but it conveys social messages to society. Artist depicts stories based on a social cause and also provides solutions to such problems. Artists from the Bhatt community possess versatile qualities. They learned this art from their ancestors. They never went to school or any art classes, it's there in their blood.

One such artist is Gopal Madan Bhatt from Pune. Originally, he is from Manu village, Diawara district of Rajasthan, India. His family members include a mother, wife, four daughters, and five brothers. There are about twenty-five family members staying together. The tenth generation of the Bhatt family staying in Pune for fifty years. His wife Anju and mother Sushila help him making puppets and other decorative items in their free time. Earlier, they used to get a good source of income, but nowadays, it's challenging for them to survive due to declining of this traditional art. Hence, he started making puppet animals. He also started other art forms like playing 'Dhol' and other musical instruments in events, weddings, and birthday parties. He is getting a good source of income from these types of celebrations.

He also performed in several Governmental social awareness campaigns like 'Beti Bachao', 'Saksharata Abhiyan', 'Pulse Polio', and many more. Artist Mr. Gopal Bhatt has appealed to all the viewers to support such traditional art and the artists.

Ms. Sushila singing and playing drum for the puppet show.

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Artist with his wife, mother and daughters.

Artist's colony.

Gopal's home.

Kids posing for a photoshoot.

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A glimpse of family members.

The musicians.

Family members are accompanying during shows.

Children learn music from their elders.

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Gopal with his family members.

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Tools and Raw Materials

The tools and raw materials that are required for making animal puppets are:

- **Dry Husk:** It is used to form the body shapes of animals.
- **Needle and Thread:** These are used to stitch the fabric and body parts.
- **Colourful Fabrics:** Attractive colour cloths are used for making animals.
- **Customized Tools and Chisels:** Flat and big chisels are used for making puppets.
- **Scissor:** It is used for cutting fabrics and for making strings, etc.
- **Bamboo Sticks:** An important material used for making the body structure of the animal. Bamboo is a strong and durable wood. So, artists prefer to use Bamboo.

The idols are painted with bright colors to enrich the look.

These figures depict the different forms of God Shiva and Goddess Parvathi.

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Different colours of clothes are used for making a puppet.

Needle and thread.

Scissor is used for cutting.

A colourful curtain is used as a background for puppet shows.

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Chisels and customized tools.

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Making Process

The very first step for making animal puppets is cutting bamboo sticks and joining them together to make a basic body structure. A dried husk is used and tied with thread on the bamboo structure to give the body shape. Once the basic body shape is formed, it is covered with fabric. Different types of colourful cloths are used to cover the body structure of the animal. The fabric is stitched with a needle and thread.

The ears are made using newspaper. A paper is folded into the required shape of the ear and then covered with fabric. It is used to giving stiffness to the ear. Then it is stitched with the needle and thread. The tail is also made by rolling newspaper in a fabric. It is attached in the same way as ears. Now comes the decoration part. A contrast colour thick lace is wrapped around the different body parts of the animal. Beginning from mouth, head, neck, middle body part to the legs are wrapped with colourful lace. Eyes are made by using buttons.

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The basic body structure is formed by using bamboo sticks and dried husk.

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The husk is tied using thread.

Animal's mouth is formed using a husk.

The thread is tied around the mouth.

Whole-body is tied using thread.

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Tying the thread firmly.

Artist makes sure the firmness of the thread.

Basic structure front view.

Side view of the body.

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Colourful cloth is cut into the required size.

The woman artist measures the cloth before stitching.

Thread and needle are used to stitch cloth.

Initially, the legs are covered with cloth.

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Proper stitching is done using thread.

Stitching process.

The middle body is also stitched with a cloth.

Animal's body partially covered with cloth.

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Now comes the neck portion.

Neck and mouth covered with cloth.

Puppet's body is completely covered with cloth.

Ears are made separately and attached.

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The tail also joined separately.

Artist is cutting the extra thread.

View after the tail is attached.

The animal puppet is decorated with contrast colour lace.

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The required lace is wrapped around, and extras are cut.

Attractively embellished horse.

Eyes are also pasted separately using buttons.

Skillfully decorated horse.

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Expert Artist Miss Anita Bhatt, Gopal's sister.

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Products

Traditional puppet making is a family business of Gopal Bhatt. Ladies' family members make decorative items like toran, Diya, hanging Diyas, cloth birds, etc. The ladies are giving a helping hand in their leisure time. But, after all, it's a seasonal business. They can get good income only during festival time. Animal puppets are an innovation to the old ones. Animals like small and big horses, elephants, and giraffes are made. These puppets are so strong that one can easily sit on them. They don't have shops to sell these items. Hence, they roam around the city and near Shopping Malls to earn their bread and butter.

Nowadays, the demand for puppet shows has been declining. Therefore, it's very difficult for artists to survive only on puppet shows. They started a new profession of Dhol performers. They formed a group called 'Nachda Punjab' entertainment group for events. They perform at weddings, ring ceremonies, small events, and birthday parties. Their performance includes Punjabi Dhol, Bhangra Group, Punjabi Boliya Tappe, Punjabi Giddha, and D.J. Mixing LED Dhol. Their group has all Rajasthani cultural programs, including Kacchi Ghodi, Mehendi, sangeet, along with singers and performers.

Different types of animals like horses, elephants, etc., are made.

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Elephant puppet.

Red colour horse.

Small and big horse.

Royal horse.

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Women artists also make Latkans and Diyas.

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Artist displaying his products.

Handmade products made by artist's family members.

Gopal painted his house walls.

Wall painting by artist Gopal.

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Anarkali Puppet.

Artists displaying wooden puppets.

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Dancing Puppet.

Magician Puppet.

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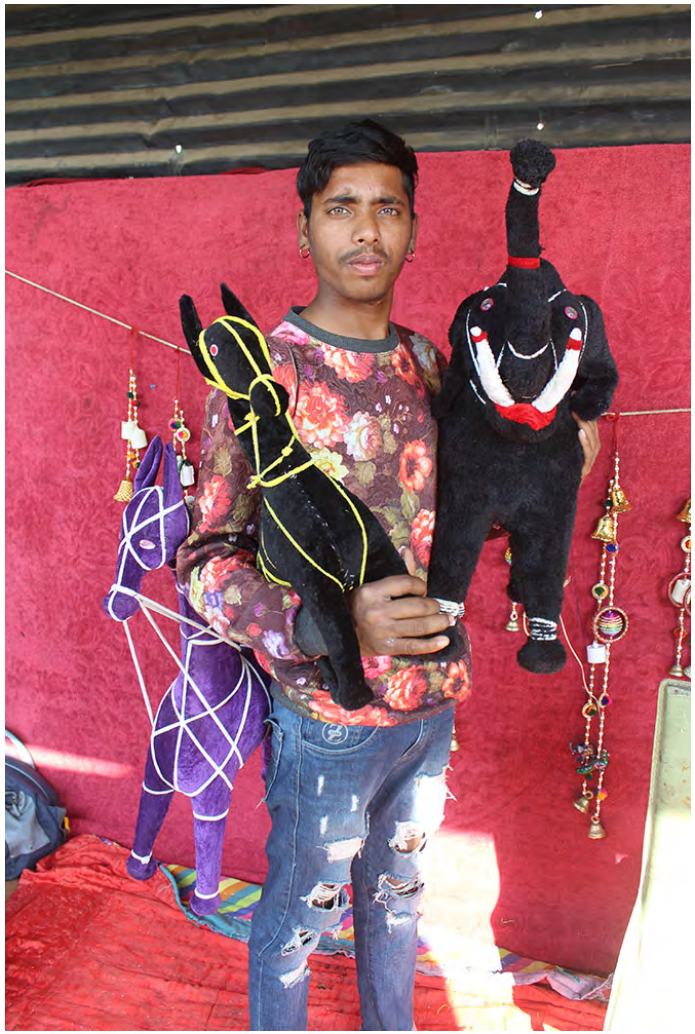

Ready to go for selling puppets.

Artist Gopal makes planters also.

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Gopal's visiting card.

Gopal's visiting card.

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Video

Gopal Bhatt

Ghoda Making

Nandlal Puppet Show

Sushila Bhatt

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Magician

Beti Bachao

Events

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